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FM AMEMBASSY KABUL
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 7184
INFO RUCNAFG/AFGHANISTAN COLLECTIVE
RUEHZG/NATO EU COLLECTIVE
RHEHAAA/NATIONAL SECURITY COUNCIL WASHINGTON DC
RUEAIIA/CIA WASHINGTON DC
RHEFDIA/DIA WASHINGTON DC
RUEKJCS/OSD WASHINGTON DC
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RHMFISS/HQ USCENTCOM MACDILL AFB FL
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S E C R E T SECTION 01 OF 02 KABUL 001050

SIPDIS

SENSITIVE
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STATE FOR SCA/FO DAS GASTRIGHT, SCA/A, S/CRS, S/CT,
EUR/RPM, INL/CIVPOL
STATE PASS TO USAID FOR AID/ANE, AID/DCHA/DG,
NSC FOR AHARRIMAN
OSD FOR KIMMITT
CENTCOM FOR CSTC-A

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TAGS: [MARR](#) [SNAR](#) [PGOV](#) [AF](#)

SUBJECT: PAG MARCH 18: TENSIONS BETWEEN ISAF AND MOD

Classified By: POLITICAL MILITARY COUNSELOR CAROL RODLEY FOR REASONS 1.
4 (B) AND (D).

Classification: SECRET
TAGS: [MARR](#) [SNAR](#) [PGOV](#) [AF](#)

ADDRESSEES:
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STATE FOR SCA/FO DAS GASTRIGHT, SCA/A, S/CRS, S/CT,
EUR/RPM
NSC FOR AHARRIMAN

Subject: (C)PAG March 18: Tensions between ISAF and
MoD

1.(S) Summary: The March 18 Policy Action Group
(PAG) chaired by Minister of Defense Wardak resulted
in a disagreement regarding the conduct of counter-
insurgency operations in Helmand. Discussion between
General McNeill (Commander, International Security
Assistance Force) and Wardak also highlighted the
necessity of rapidly building political support for
the counter-insurgency operations that commenced on
March 21st. (Note. The start of Operation "Now Roz"

coincided with the Afghan New Year and was designed to engage the enemy prior to their expected Spring Offensive. End note). The discussion clearly underscored a difference of opinion between Wardak and McNeill regarding the short-term focus and results expected of this operation. End Summary.

Disagreement between Wardak and McNeill

2.(S) During a discussion about Operation "Now Ruz" and its desired effects, Wardak startled most international observers by stating that the focus of Operation "Now Ruz" must be to "quickly regain control of several districts in Helmand that are no longer under the control of the GoA." He added that the people are losing confidence in ISAF and the GoA, expect quick results, and will not wait until the summer for positive results. Wardak,s primary complaint was that Operation "Now Ruz" plan did not satisfy this requirement to retake districts now held by the Taliban and should be changed as any failure to quickly regain control of the districts in question will result in the loss of support for the GoA,s efforts. General McNeill rebutted this statement by declaring that ISAF will conduct operations in Helmand throughout the spring and summer. He also stated that Operation "Now Ruz" will set the conditions for success by initially conducting operations in Northern Helmand, after which operations would shift to the South. The kinetic operations would facilitate reconstruction efforts conducted in cooperation with the ANA throughout the province. Wardak ended the discussion by stating that "there is a need to

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achieve results quickly to restore the public,s confidence. Many districts are out of our control. That is the whole point." Gen. McNeill pointedly reminded Wardak that President Karzai had been briefed on and concurred with the concept of Operation Now Ruz. He stated, "if the GoA has now changed its position, he would need to consult further with the President."

UNAMA Defuses the Situation

3.(S) UNAMA,s representative Chris Alexander attempted to smooth over the dispute and emphasized UNAMA,s perception that the situation in Helmand was "more upbeat than is commonly portrayed" based upon the ability of coalition forces to capture Taliban leadership. He observed that the political leadership in Helmand was weak due to the lack of an actively engaged governor. He submitted that there was no sense re-launching a military offensive if appropriate governance was not in place. However, he stressed that there was a need to continue efforts against the enemy in Northern Helmand.

Comment

4.(S) Wardak,s comments clearly depicted a fault line between ISAF and some parts of the GOA. The failure to regain control of districts, such as Musa Qala, in their view will only serve to undermine the credibility of the GoA. This will likely lead to increased passive support of the insurgency throughout the nation and a subsequent increase in the insurgent,s capabilities. Responding quickly to this concern, ISAF is already working on two fronts: to brief key GoA officials more thoroughly on the plan and to revise the plans to address these issues.

